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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 8 April 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to you with grave concern regarding the intensification of military aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the besieged Gaza Strip. Thirteen Palestinian civilians, including women, have been killed and dozens more have been injured by a series of Israeli air strikes in addition to artillery fire against the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours. Among the innocent civilians brutally murdered by the occupying Power were a mother and her daughter.

In the light of the dangerous deterioration of the situation and escalation of tensions, the Palestinian leadership appeals to the international community to call on Israel to cease its military attacks against the Gaza Strip, to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law and to cease forthwith all attacks against the Palestinian civilian population and all forms of military reprisals and collective punishment against them. This is imperative to stop the bloodshed and to avert a return to the vicious cycle of violence that has consumed so many innocent lives and wrought vast destruction and devastation on our people.

Yesterday, 7 April, military air strikes were launched by the Israeli occupying forces against the Rafah, Khan Younis and Gaza City areas of the Gaza Strip, killing five Palestinians. Among those killed was a 50-year-old man, Mahmoud Al-Manasra, who died after shells were fired near his home in the Shuja'iyya neighbourhood of Gaza City. Five other civilians, including a young child, were also injured in the attack. In another military attack, the occupying forces killed four Palestinians, Salah Al-Tarabeen, age 38, Mus'ab Al-Sufi, age 18, Muhammad Al-Mahmoum, age 25, and Khaled Al-Dubari, age 21.

The occupying Power's military attacks continued today, being carried out deliberately and with indiscriminate and excessive force, in accordance with the recent declarations made by Israeli leaders regarding their intentions to continue to assault the Gaza Strip. Thus far today, Israeli military strikes in and around Gaza City, Rafah and Khan Younis have killed six more Palestinians and injured dozens

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more. In these attacks, the occupying forces struck a home and killed a woman, Najah Qudaih, age 45, and her daughter, Nidal Qudaih, age 21, injured another daughter and three more civilians. Talal Abu Taha, age 55, was killed in yet another air strike, while an assault against the town of Khuza'a resulted in the killing of two Palestinian men, Abdallah Al-Qarra and Mo'taz Abu Jamei. Also today, the occupying forces killed Ra'ed Shehada, age 27, in Beit Lahiya, as well as Ahmed Ghorab, age 31, and Mahmoud Wa'el Al-Jaru in Shuja'iyya in Gaza City.

The Palestinian leadership condemns these brutal and unlawful military attacks against the Palestinian civilian population and calls for a halt to all acts of Israeli aggression and terror against our people. In this regard, it must be recalled that the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are entitled to protection under international humanitarian law and they must not continue to be denied this protection and to be subjected to the merciless assaults and systematic human rights violations being perpetrated by the occupying Power with impunity. In this connection, we reiterate the demand for the immediate and complete lifting of the inhumane, illegal and immoral blockade imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip for nearly four years now, which amounts to the collective punishment of 1.5 million people.

At the same time, we are compelled to underscore once again the critical situation on the ground in the West Bank due to the continuation and escalation of other illegal Israeli policies and practices. In particular, Israel's illegal and aggressive colonization campaign continues apace. In addition to the recent provocative declaration of the intention to construct more illegal settlement units in Occupied East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupying forces have in recent days carried out the destruction of more Palestinian property and land. Homes, newly paved roads, farm buildings and lighting infrastructure were destroyed by Israeli bulldozers in the village of Al-Aqaba in the Tubas area in the northern Jordan Valley yesterday, 7 April. The head of the village Council has alarmingly indicated that the occupying Power has served the village in recent years with numerous demolition orders, leaving 95 per cent of the village homes subject to demolition. Moreover, extremist settlers continue to rampage through the Occupied Palestinian Territory and have caused destruction to more Palestinian agricultural land in an area south of Al-Khalil (Hebron).

The occupying Power also continues to arrest and detain Palestinian civilians, including women, violating their human rights and subjecting them to severe intimidation and humiliation. In this regard, we must draw your attention to a recent raid by the Israeli occupying forces on the village of Awarta, east of Nablus in the northern West Bank, a village that has been subjected to numerous raids in recent weeks in connection with Israeli interrogations and investigations regarding the killing of a family in a nearby settlement. On Thursday, 7 April, hundreds of Israeli troops entered the village shortly after midnight, raiding homes and rounding up dozens of men and women in the darkness of the night. At least 100 Palestinian women, some elderly, were arrested and forced into a camp, where soldiers subjected them to questioning, fingerprinting and DNA testing. This incident has further deepened the trauma and fear that prevails among the Palestinian civilian population as a result of such systematic harassment, intimidation, use of force and collective punishment carried out by the occupying Power.

In the light of the gravity of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the Gaza Strip at present, the Palestinian leadership calls on the international community to act with urgency to prevent the slaughter of more innocent civilians and to prevent the further deterioration of this already tense and volatile situation. The international community must assume its responsibilities under international law to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, respects all of its obligations under the law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and relevant United Nations resolutions. It should not absolve Israel of these obligations by permitting such military attacks, the killing and injury of innocent civilians, the destruction of property, the colonization of the Palestinian land and the arbitrary imprisonment and detention of Palestinian civilians to be perpetrated with total impunity and without accountability. The Security Council in particular is urged to act to uphold its own resolutions in this regard and its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 388 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 April 2011 (A/ES-10/515-S/2011/224) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations